Amendments to the Claims

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of ranking products of a plurality of different brands based upon data records stored in at least one computer readable storage medium and including data indicating product features and values corresponding to the product features, said method comprising:

assigning a plurality of feature categories corresponding to a plurality of product features for at least one product category based on available data in the data records;

assigning a weighted importance to the plurality of feature categories based on available data in the data records;

assigning evaluative metrics to each feature in each feature category;

ranking products of the plurality of different brands in the product category according to the weighted importance of the feature categories included in each item and based on each product's evaluative metrics;

receiving ~~a selection~~ a plurality of selections from a user ~~of at least one feature category that is~~ indicating a plurality of feature categories of importance to the user for the product category;

assigning an increased weighted importance of the selected feature ~~category~~ categories;

generating a customized ranking of products in the product category ranked based on the weighted importance of each feature categories, the increased weighted importance of the selected feature categories, and each product's evaluative metrics; and

providing to the user, ~~a~~ the generated customized ranking of products in the product category ~~ranked based on the increased weighted importance of the selected feature category and each product's evaluative metrics~~.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein assigning a weighted importance to each feature category comprises assigning a score between 0 and 100 to each feature category in a product category.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

assigning a tag to each essential feature category of each product category based on available data;

assigning a relation type of kind to each product category if the product category includes all of the feature categories having the tag of another product category and includes at least one feature category that the other product category does not have wherein the product category is labeled a child category of the other product category and the other product category is labeled a parent category of the child product category;

creating links within each product category to reflect the assigned relation; and

using the assigned relation to create at least one hierarchical product category tree wherein each hierarchical category tree has a heading product category that is only a parent category and changing the assigned weighted importance of a feature in the parent category changes the assigned weighted importance of the feature in the child category.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein the assigned weighted importance of a feature in a child category overrides weighted importance assigned to the feature in the child category's parent category.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

assigning a property type to each feature category;

wherein said step of assigning the evaluative metrics to each feature in each feature category is based on the feature category property type and available data unless the property type is a discrete property type.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6 wherein assigning the property type comprises:

assigning a numerical property type to a feature category if the features in the feature category are measured in a quantitative way;

assigning an enumerated property type to a feature category if the features in the feature category have a fixed number of specified values including

assigning a sub-property type of discrete if one feature in a feature category is not inherently more valuable than another,

assigning a sub-property type of scalar if one feature in a feature category is inherently more valuable than another

assigning a sub-property type of Boolean if the features in a feature category may have a valuation of only yes or no;

assigning a sub-property type of qualified Boolean if the feature in a feature category may have a valuation of yes, no, or optional; and

assigning a property type of text property if the features in the feature category are represented by free form text.

9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6 further comprising:

assigning a special meta-tag to a cluster of feature categories based on groupings derived from the data records if the features of the categories may have a value consisting of one of: yes, no or optional.

10. (Original) The method of claim 9 further comprising:

ranking items within a product category by the number of feature categories represented in an item within a cluster of feature categories.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6 further comprising:

assigning a evaluative tag of forward metric to a feature category if a value of an item in a product category increases as a numerical valuation of features within the feature category increases based on available data;

assigning a evaluative tag of backward metric based on available data to a feature category if the value of an item in a product category decreases as numerical valuation of features within the feature category increases; and

assigning a evaluative tag of non applicable based on available data to a feature category if the value of an item in a product category does not change with numerical valuation of features within a feature category,

wherein the evaluative tag is used to rank items in a product category.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6 further comprising:

presenting a user with a choice of at least two feature categories for sorting; and

sorting items within a product category according to the user chosen feature categories, the weighted importance of all the feature categories and the evaluative metrics of the feature categories applied to the features within the feature categories.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

deriving ranges of values within feature categories from the data records to determine natural ranges for grouping numerical features.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 13 further comprising:

presenting a user with sub-ranges of values within feature categories for filtering product data to be presented.

15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

applying statistical analysis to derive the placement of an item within a product category with respect to at least one feature category.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15 wherein statistical analysis is applied to derive the placement of an item within a product category with respect to two feature categories.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 further comprising:

graphing the placement of an item within a product category.

18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 17 further comprising:

presenting the user with a graph of the placement of a user chosen item with respect to other items in a product category based on the at least one feature category.

19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

assigning relation types to each product category to relate each product category to at least one other product category if a related product category exists including

assigning a kind of relation type if a product category shares all the feature categories of another product category and has at least one feature category that the second product category does not have,

assigning a part of relation type if items in a product category are used only by inclusion in items in a second product category,

assigning a accessory relation type if items in a first product category are used only in conjunction with a second product category although the items in the second product category may be used without the items in the first product category,

assigning a resource relation type if items in a first product category are used only in conjunction with items in a second product category and must be replaced or replenished; and

creating links within each product category to reflect each assigned relation type.

20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19 further comprising:

creating hierarchical category trees using the kind of relation type assignments wherein each hierarchical category tree has one product category that is only a parent category.

21. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the products in each product category are products offered for sale by merchants.

22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the products in each product category are products offered for sale on the internet.

23. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

assigning a weighted importance to buying information categories of product based on available data and ranking merchants offering products based on the weighted importance of the buying information categories.

24. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23 further comprising:

assigning evaluative metrics to the buying information categories of the product categories and ranking the merchants offering each item based on the weighted importance of the buying information categories and evaluative metrics of the buying information categories.

25. (Original) The method of claim 23 wherein the buying information categories include price, shipping costs, shipping method and availability.

26. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

allowing a user to choose an item from a list of products in a product category; and

displaying the merchants selling the chosen products.

27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26 further comprising:

displaying buying information for each merchant selling the chosen products.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26 further comprising:

displaying the merchant buying information in a ranked list wherein the merchant buying information is ranked according to a weighted importance assigned to each buying information category and evaluative metrics applied to each buying information category based on the data records.

29. (Currently Amended) A method of ranking products of a plurality of different brands, said method comprising:

assigning a plurality of feature categories to each product category based on data records stored in at least one computer readable storage medium and including data indicating product features and values corresponding to the product features;

assigning a property type to each feature category;

receiving ~~a selection~~ a plurality of selections from a user ~~of at least one feature category that is~~ indicating a plurality of feature categories that are of importance to the user;

assigning evaluative metrics to each product feature in each feature category based on the property type and available data unless the property type is a discrete property type;

generating a customized ranking of products in the product category ranked based on the weighted importance of each feature categories, the increased weighted importance of the selected feature categories, and each product's evaluative metrics; and

providing the user, ~~a~~ the generated customized ranking of products of a plurality of different brands in a product category ~~ranked based on each product's evaluative metrics~~.

30. (Currently Amended) A system ranking products of a plurality of different brands based upon data records stored in at least one data storage device and including data indicating product features and values corresponding to the product features, said system comprising:

means for assigning a plurality of feature categories corresponding to a plurality of product features for at least one product category based on available data in the data records;

means for assigning a weighted importance to the plurality of feature categories based on available data in the data records;

means for assigning evaluative metrics to each feature in each feature category;

means for ranking products of the plurality of different brands in the product category according to the weighted importance of the feature categories included in each item and based on each product's evaluative metrics;

means for receiving ~~a selection~~ a plurality of selections from a user ~~of at least one feature category that is~~ indicating a plurality of feature categories that are of importance to the user for the product category;

means for assigning an increased weighted importance of the selected feature ~~category~~ categories;

means for generating a customized ranking of products in the product category ranked based on the weighted importance of each feature categories, the increased weighted importance of the selected feature categories, and each product's evaluative metrics; and

means for providing to the user, ~~a~~ the generated customized ranking of products in the product category ranked ~~based on the increased weighted importance of the selected feature category and each product's evaluative metrics~~.

31. (Currently Amended) A computer readable storage medium containing executable computer program instructions which when executed cause a digital processing system to perform a method for ranking products of a plurality of different brands based upon data records stored in at least one computer readable storage medium and including data indicating product features and values corresponding to the product features, said method comprising:

assigning a plurality of feature categories corresponding to product features for at least one product category based on available data in the data records;

assigning a weighted importance to the plurality of feature categories based on available data in the data records;

assigning evaluative metrics to each feature in each feature category;

ranking products of the plurality of different brands in the product category according to the weighted importance of the feature categories included in each item and based on each product's evaluative metrics;

receiving ~~a selection~~ a plurality of selections from a user ~~of at least one feature category that is~~ indicating a plurality of feature categories that are of importance to the user for the product category;

assigning an increased weighted importance of the selected feature ~~category~~ categories;

generating a customized ranking of products in the product category ranked based on the weighted importance of each feature categories, the increased weighted importance of the selected feature categories, and each product's evaluative metrics; and

providing to the user, ~~a~~ the generated customized ranking of products in the product category ~~ranked based on the increased weighted importance of the selected feature category and each product's evaluative metrics~~.

32. (Currently Amended) A method of ranking products of a plurality of different brands based upon data records stored in at least one computer readable storage medium and including data indicating product features and values corresponding to the product features, said method comprising:

assigning a plurality of feature categories corresponding to a plurality of product features for at least one product category based on available data in the data records;

assigning a weighted importance to the plurality of feature categories based on available data in the data records;

assigning evaluative metrics to each feature in each feature category;

receiving ~~a selection~~ selections from a user ~~of at least one feature category that is~~ indicating a plurality of feature categories that are of importance to the user for the product category;

assigning an increased weighted importance of the selected feature ~~category~~ categories;

generating a customized ranking of products in the product category ranked based on the weighted importance of each feature categories, the increased weighted importance of the selected feature categories, and each product's evaluative metrics; and

providing to the user, ~~a~~ the generated customized ranking products of the plurality of different brands in the product category ~~ranked based on the increased weighted importance of the selected feature category, the weighted importance of the other feature categories, and each product's evaluative metrics~~.

33. (New) A system for generating a customized ranking of products of a plurality of different brands in a product category comprising:

a database having data records for a plurality of products of at least one product category, said data records indicating features of said plurality of products in said at least one product category;

a controller that receives a plurality of weighting selections from a user for a plurality of feature categories corresponding to the importance of said plurality of feature categories to the user; and

a processor that generates a ranking of said plurality of products of the plurality of different brands in the product category based at least partially on said plurality of weighting selections of said plurality of feature categories from the user, and said data records in said database, so that said generated ranking of said plurality of products is customized to the user.

34. (New) The system of claim 33, wherein said data records includes evaluative metrics associated with said plurality of products, and said processor generates said customized ranking based on said evaluative metrics of said plurality of products.

35. (New) The system of claim 34, wherein said processor generates an initial ranking of said plurality of products in said at least one product category by assigning initial weighted importance to said plurality of feature categories.

36. (New) The system of claim 35, wherein said processor re-sorts said initial ranking of products based on said plurality of selections received from the user.

37. (New) The system of claim 36, wherein said processor re-sorts said initial ranking of products by assigning an increased weighted importance of the selected feature categories.

38. (New) The system of claim 33, wherein said processor further assigns evaluative metrics to each feature in each feature category.

39. (New) The system of claim 33, wherein said controller is graphically rendered for the user to allow indication of plurality of feature categories of importance to the user.

40. (New) The system of claim 33, wherein said plurality of feature categories are graphically rendered for the user.

41. (New) The system of claim 40, wherein said plurality of feature categories are graphically rendered in a pop-up window.

42. (New) The system of claim 33, wherein said controller allows the user to assign numerical values to weigh said plurality of feature categories.

43. (New) The system of claim 33, wherein said controller allows the user to select from a numerical scale to weigh said plurality of feature categories.

44. (New) The system of claim 33, wherein said controller allows the user to assign a letter value to weigh said plurality of feature categories.

45. (New) The system of claim 33, wherein said system further graphically renders said customized ranking of products in the product category for the user.

46. (New) The system of claim 33, wherein said processor is adapted to reduce at least one of said plurality of weighting selections from the user to include additional products in said generated customized ranking.

47. (New) The system of claim 33, wherein said plurality of feature categories includes brand and price.

48. (New) The system of claim 33, wherein said system is connected to a wide area network and remotely accessible by the user.

49. (New) The method of claim 1, further including graphically rendering the user's selections indicating importance of the plurality of feature categories to the user.

50. (New) The method of claim 1, further including graphically rendering said plurality of feature categories for the user.

51. (New) The method of claim 29, further including graphically rendering the user's selections indicating importance of the plurality of feature categories to the user.

52. (New) The method of claim 29, further including graphically rendering said plurality of feature categories for the user.

53. (New) The system of claim 30, further including a means for graphically rendering the user's selections indicating importance of the plurality of feature categories to the user.

54. (New) The system of claim 30, further including a means for graphically rendering said plurality of feature categories for the user.

55. (New) The medium of claim 31, wherein said method further includes graphically rendering the user's selections indicating importance of the plurality of feature categories to the user.

56. (New) The medium of claim 31, wherein said method further includes graphically rendering said plurality of feature categories for the user.

57. (New) The method of claim 32, further including graphically rendering the user's selections indicating importance of the plurality of feature categories to the user.

58. (New) The method of claim 32, further including graphically rendering said plurality of feature categories for the user.